


# **Fightback**

July 2013

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*



**What is work?  
Wage labour,  
unpaid work  
& feminism**

**Istanbul to Brazil:  
neoliberalism,  
democracy  
& resistance**

**The ongoing attack  
on workers' rights**

**McDonald's strike reports**

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## E d i t o r i a l

Welcome to the July 2013 issue of Fightback, publication of Fightback (Aotearoa/NZ). Fightback is a socialist organisation with branches in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch.

Labour, or work, is at the centre of a historical materialist (or Marxist) view of social relations. Ian Anderson, Fightback coordinating editor, considers the nature of unpaid labour such as 'housework' in relation to socialist and feminist politics.

In a continuation of on-going government attacks on both employed and unemployed workers, two bills proposed by National MPs seek to further gut union rights. Fightback member Joel Cosgrove argues the need for fighting unions that take industrial action to defend and extend rights.

Rebuilding working class solidarity and self-activity is a matter of both theory and practice. On April 29th, negotiations broke down between McDonald's and Unite

Union, with McDonald's offering a paltry 25 cent pay increase for their staff. Nationwide, 85% of unionised McDonald's workers voted to reject this offer and take action for improved pay and conditions. On page 14 Fightback covers strike actions in Wellington during this campaign.

Our struggle is global, against both capitalism and imperialism. Fightback reprints a piece by Andrew Tait, originally published by the International Socialist Organisation, on popular movements in Turkey and Brazil (p15-18); Byron Clark covers Papa New Guinea's increasing 'regionalism' in moving to reject Australian and New Zealand trade dominance (p19) and finally Ian Anderson reviews Five Broken Cameras, a documentary on Palestinian resistance screened as part of Aotearoa/NZ's first national Conference on Palestine (p20).

## In Brief

### Rockgas workers picket National MPs office

Striking Rockgas workers marched down to National MP Jami-Lee Ross' electorate office on June 26th to protest Ross' anti worker member's bill.

The Rockgas (as subsidiary of Contact Energy) drivers have been on strike now for four weeks in response to Rockgas' most recent pay offer, which is lower than what is offered to new employees.

FIRST Union organiser Jared Abbott said the current law was weak and easy to get around and that Ross' bill would make it weaker still.

"Jami-Lee Ross' bill would mean employers could offer very low wages, knowing that if workers took industrial action in support of a pay claim, other workers could simply be brought in much easier than is currently the case," Jared Abbott said.

### NZ Post cuts 500 jobs

New Zealand post has revealed plans to close its mail processing centres in Hamilton, Wellington and Dunedin at a cost of 500 jobs.

NZ Post has said there will be between 250-350 jobs at expanded processing centres in Auckland, Manawatu and Christchurch, although in a press release the Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union has stated that NZ Post has said that less than 5% of laid off workers will get any of these new jobs, while also highlighting that the jobs are 'potential', indicating that NZ Post may well be padding the number of new jobs to make the total job loss appear lower.

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## Green Left Weekly report on Fightback conference



Liam Flenady speaks on the *Building an anti-capitalist movement in Australasia* panel at the Fightback 2013 conference.

*This report on the Fightback conference which took place over Queens Birthday weekend originally appeared in Green Left Weekly and was written by Liam Flenady, who attended the conference representing the Socialist Alliance (Australia).*

More than 50 people gathered in the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre in Wellington on May 31 and June 1 for the annual conference of the socialist organisation Fightback.

The sessions were filled with lively and respectful debate across a number of different perspectives within the left on national and international issues.

Fightback 2013 featured speakers from Fightback, the International Socialist Organisation (Aotearoa), the Socialist

Party of Australia, and the Australian Socialist Alliance.

The first panel session “Global context: Crisis, Imperialism, Fightback” set the tone for the conference — all speakers noting that the global capitalist system is still deeply in crisis and that the working class is being made to pay for it.

Discussion centred on the resistance to austerity in Europe and the rise of left parties such as SYRIZA.

Another key theme was the state of the Australian and New Zealand economies now that the Australian mining boom seems to be waning.

The closing panel session “Building an anti-capitalist movement in Australasia” debated the implications of the crisis of capitalism, neoliberal austerity, and the end of the Australian mining boom for

socialist work in the movements.

Speakers agreed that a dual strategy was necessary, one that built up a core of well-trained and conscious socialist activists, at the same time as reaching out and developing the layers of people coming into the struggle and the structures for strong, durable campaigns.

One of the most striking elements of the conference was the depth with which Fightback have been grappling with key issues concerning the socialist left today.

In the session “Ecosocialism or barbarism”, Daphne Lawless argued that the concept of ecosocialism is critical to Marxists today.

Ecosocialism, Lawless said, puts environmental politics at the heart of the socialist vision, and aims to put social-

# Fightback conference



Marika Pratley speaks at the *Marxism, Feminism and Gender Liberation* session.

ism at the heart of the environmental movement.

Rather than simply a slogan or redundant phrase, Lawless said that “as with the term socialist feminism, ecosocialism is a question of emphasis and of organisation”.

Against more “productivist” ideas of socialism found in the 20th century, which put quantity of production over quality of life, the idea of ecosocialism is “multi-dimensional” and “holistic” and deals with the complete picture of the experiences of life under capitalism.

Jared Philips discussed the changing position of Fightback towards the issue of Maori liberation. Fightback has been deeply involved in the Mana Movement, led by prominent Maori activist Hone Harawira, and recognised the need for a more nuanced and open position to the

issue.

For instance, Phillips said that socialists must recognise that Maori corporatism is now a reality which equates to approximately 8% of the national economy, and a genuine socialist programme needs to reflect that. Marxists can’t idealistically deny the role of Maori corporation.

Marika Pratley led the session on “Marxism, feminism and gender liberation”, arguing that socialists need to take seriously the question of feminism in theory and day-to-day work.

She argued that socialists should see the oppression of women as related to class oppression, but not completely reducible to it, and that socialists should be actively involved in the feminist movement.

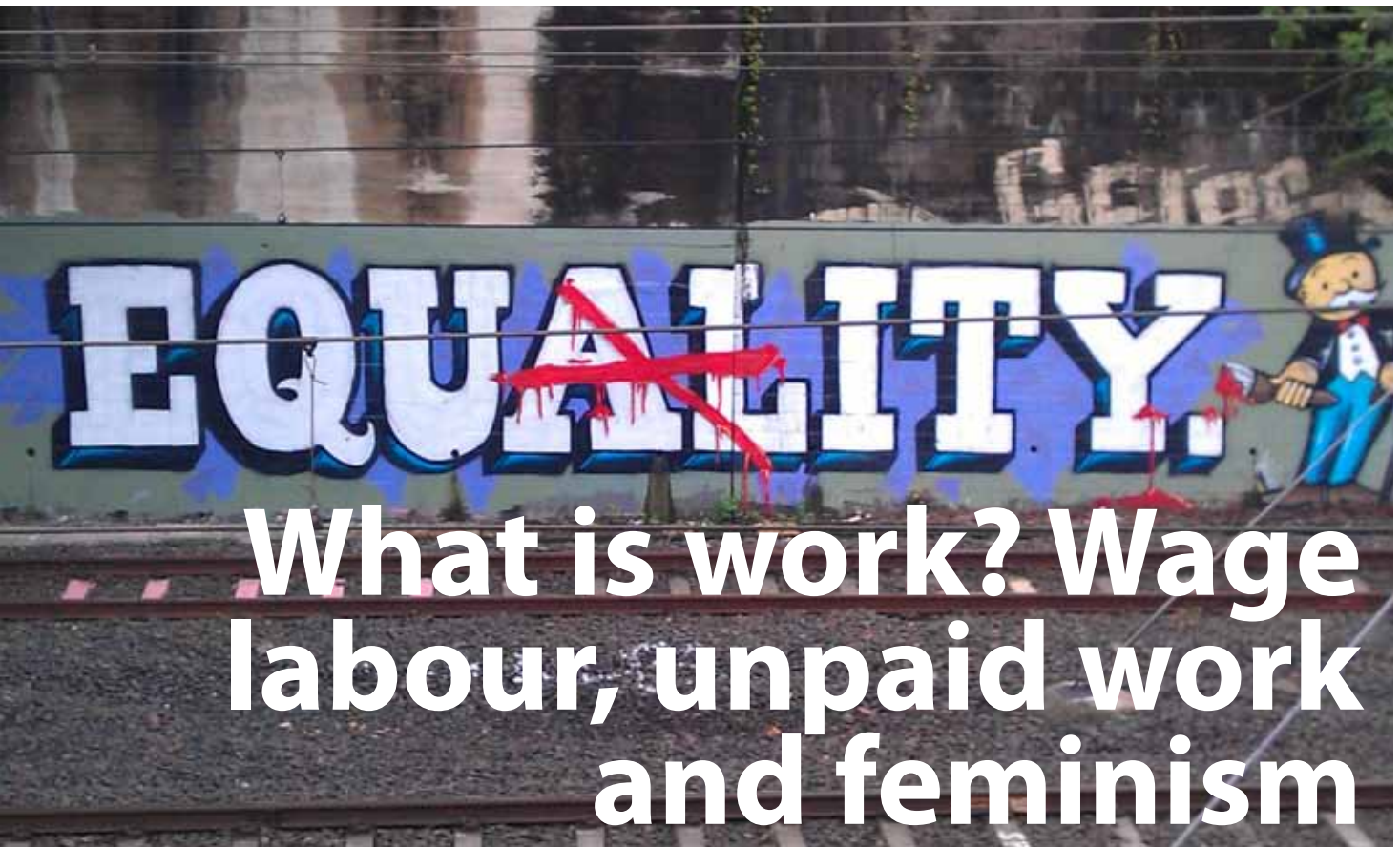
There was also discussion on how socialists can put feminism to work in practice within their organisations.

Another key aspect to the conference was the importance placed on work in the trade unions.

There was debate over the exact strategy for work in trade unions in New Zealand. However, there was agreement that while the trade union movement is largely on the defensive in New Zealand and Australia, socialists should be involved in trade unions to raise class-consciousness and put forward a class struggle perspective.

On the final evening, conference attendees leafleted a number of McDonald’s stores in Wellington in support of a Unite union-run campaign for better pay and conditions for McDonald’s workers.





## What is work? Wage labour, unpaid work and feminism

*Ian Anderson, Fightback coordinating editor. With contributions by Kassie Hartendorp.*

Labour, or work, is central to historical materialist (or Marxist) views of history. Stereotypically, this means only caring about men wearing overalls and working in factories. However, factory labour is only one form of wage labour, which in turn is only one form of labour.

Labour is the sum total of human activities that reproduce social existence. Work keeps us alive, nourished; able to participate in human society. In *The German Ideology*, Marx argued that the “first historical act” is the “production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself.”

Labour includes, but is not limited to, wage labour. Unpaid labour in the home – cooking, cleaning, caring for children, the sick and elderly – reproduces our social existence. This unpaid domestic labour, including housework, has been termed “reproductive labour.”

Women still do the bulk of reproductive labour under capitalism. Surveys of unpaid work are not collected often, showing the priorities of the ruling class. However, 2009/2010 Time Use Surveys show that while women and men perform similar hours of work, the majority of men’s work is paid while the majority of women’s work is unpaid.

Given the onslaught of attacks on both paid and unpaid workers, it is necessary to understand the relationship between wage labour, unpaid work, and unemployment. As women work the majority of unpaid hours, this understanding is also necessary to reconciling socialist and feminist demands.

### **Wage labour, unemployment and unpaid domestic labour**

Wage labour is one form of labour, central to capitalist production. Wage labour was generalised in recent centuries by the violent global dispossession of land and resources, forcing the vast majority to labour for a propertied mi-

nority. Labour by the majority produces the value which capitalists rely on, value which is the seed of working class power.

State and capital use unemployment to control the demands of wage labour. This is a deliberate, stated strategy. Suzanne Snively, member of the Reserve Bank Board of Directors during the crucial attack period of 1985-1992 states:

“It was a manageable thing for the Reserve Bank to use employment, and unemployment, as the way to get wages down... So they used it.”

When unionised McDonald’s workers plan to strike during a breakdown in negotiations, managers say they’ll be fired. Although this threat is strictly illegal, it reveals the underlying logic of unemployment for the capitalist class. Demanding full employment unites the needs of unemployed workers and wage workers.

However, beneficiary advocates such as MANA’s Sue Bradford distinguish

# Womens liberation

between unemployed workers (who are seeking full-time work, and may or may not rely on a benefit) and beneficiaries (who due to physical or mental impairments, or parental commitments, are unable to commit to full-time work). Beneficiary-bashing deliberately blurs the line between these categories.

Women on the Domestic Purposes Benefit work full-time to raise children. Similarly, spouses who work to feed families entirely on their partner's wage do not register as unemployed, because they are not seeking full-time work.

There are two main differences between 'housework' and wage labour:

- Housework is largely unpaid
- Unpaid housework does not directly produce profits for capitalists

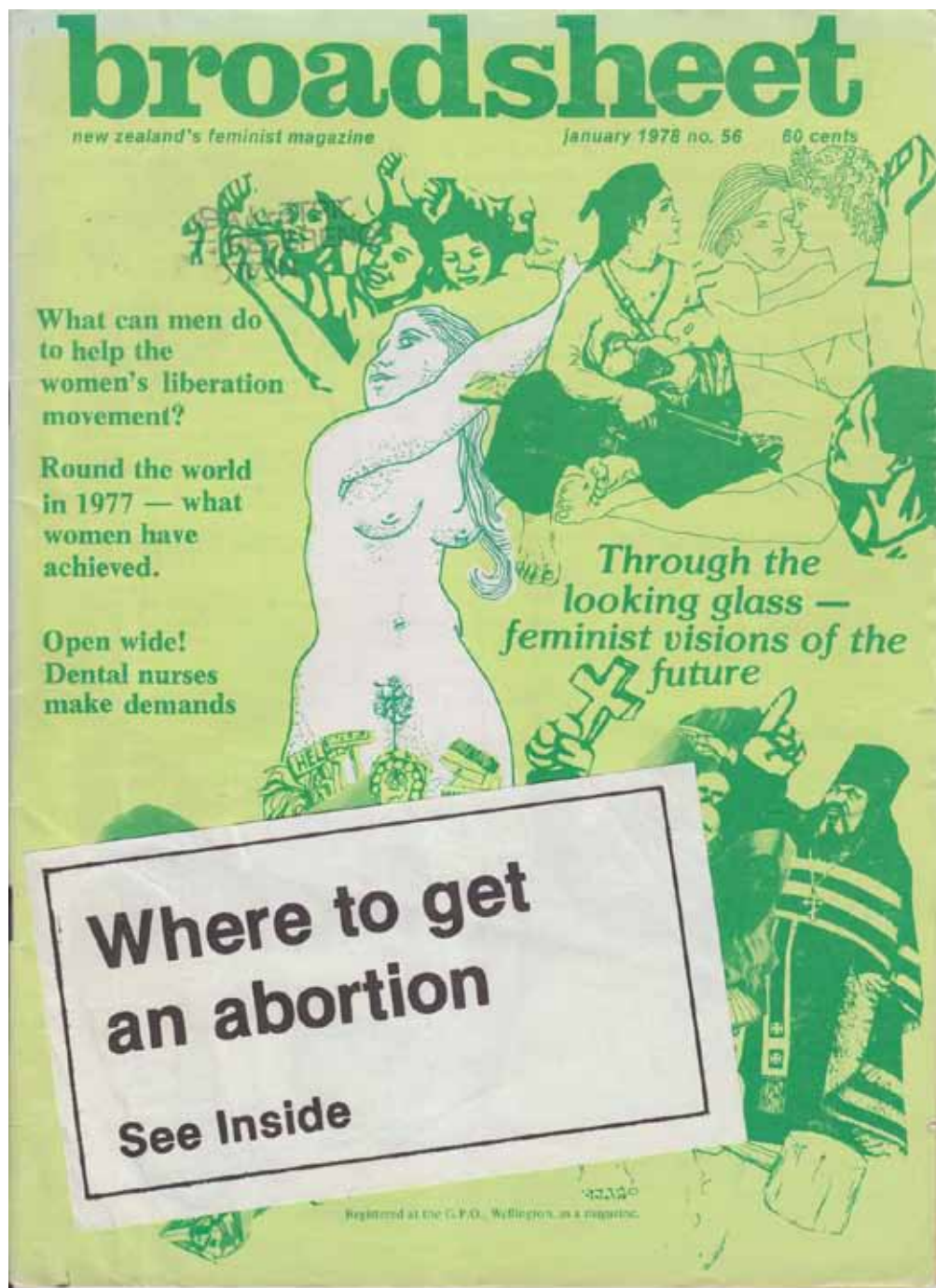
Slaves are also unpaid; both historically, and currently throughout much of the majority world. Every class society has relied, at least in part, on unpaid labour.

The question of housework and profits is more complicated. The labour of unpaid domestic workers realises the value of commodities; cleaning fluids, appliances, ingredients, and numerous other products. Domestic labour in turn reproduces the existence of wage labourers. Arguably this sets the price of labour power, by mediating between wages and the price of domestic commodities.

Women also perform the majority of 'voluntary work' - unpaid labour for organisations. This could include staffing a soup kitchen, providing support for youth, collecting funds for striking workers, or dispensing evangelical literature.

Voluntary work fills in the cracks (or gaping chasms) in the system; trauma, hunger, ecological damage. In capitalist terms, these cracks are 'externalities,' not directly relevant to producing profit and therefore taken up by volunteers.

At worst, voluntary work can operate ac-



Broadsheet was an important feminist magazine that was printed from 1972 to 1997

cording to principles of 'charity.' Charity encourages passivity, by addressing symptoms and obscuring causes. At best, voluntary work can operate according to principles of 'solidarity.' Solidarity supports mutual self-activity, to overcome oppression and exploitation.

In the neoliberal era of capitalism, participation in voluntary work has lessened, while women's participation in wage labour (always an aspect of capitalism) has increased. As women participate in wage labour, they also participate

in industrial struggles, including the recent strike wave of aged care workers in Aotearoa.

At the same time, many women have taken on the 'double-shift' of wage work and housework. Women still perform most unpaid labour.

## Capitalism and patriarchy: parallel systems?

In a seminal 1979 essay, *The Unhappy*



# Womens liberation

Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, Heidi Hartmann argues that feminism has been subordinated to Marxism in most attempts:

“The ‘marriage’ of Marxism and feminism has been like the marriage of husband and wife depicted in English common law: Marxism and feminism are one, and that one is Marxism.”

On the flipside, feminism without socialism is often “blind to history.” Hartmann suggests that capitalism and patriarchy are parallel systems, requiring a socialist-feminist response.

Where housework is not directly waged or salaried, proving whether or not it produces profit is a blind alley. Through commodification, all acceptable activities in capitalist society (including sport, music – even watching television) increasingly support the production of economic value, and the reproduction of social existence.

The dominant system is both an economic and a social relation. Central aspects of women’s subordination in the private sphere, such as sexual violence, cannot be easily reduced to economics.

Hartmann argues that patriarchy rests on men’s control of women’s labour, maintained through sexual control of women’s bodies. Sexual control could take the form of intimate partner abuse, denial of reproductive rights; the denial of the right to self-identification of gender and sexuality.

Patriarchy predates capitalism. Even Friedrich Engels, key collaborator of Marx, argued that the first historic division of labour was the division between men and women. However, patriarchy has found a new, historically specific form under capitalism, with the division between wage labour and the private sphere.

Although men would ultimately benefit

from the creation of an egalitarian society, we often defend our limited privileges within this system when challenged. These daily privileges include more control over our own bodies, less unpaid commitments, and therefore more leisure time than women.

If patriarchy and capitalism are parallel systems, socialism and feminism must be parallel responses.

## Feminism: from patriarchy to kyriarchy?

More recently, feminists have moved from the concept of ‘patriarchy’ (rule of the father) to ‘kyriarchy’ (rule of the master/lord). Kyriarchy is often conceived as a pyramid, with the most powerful at the top and the least powerful at the bottom.

Kyriarchy describes a complex web of power structures, recognising intersecting oppressions including racism, transphobia, homophobia and disability. This concept uses ‘intersectionality’ as a framework to describe and understand how forms of oppression reinforce each other. For example, it takes into account that a white able-bodied woman, may have more power in Western society than a black, disabled man.

Although this framework is useful in overcoming the one-sidedness of previous approaches to understanding oppression, it has some limitations. Firstly, the concept takes ‘domination’ or ‘rule’ out of any defined historical context, and secondly it doesn’t distinguish identity from economic relations.

By naming the problem as ‘domination’ or ‘rule,’ kyriarchy theory leaves crucial questions unanswered about how societies produce particular forms of oppression. Capitalism emerged out of a particular historical context; not all societies have been capitalist. Patriarchy has also taken a new form in the capitalist era. Historical materialist, or Marxist,

analysis helps to understand the ‘historical specificity’ of social structures, the way ‘everything flows and nothing stays.’

Kyriarchy theory describes oppression in terms of personal identity. This approach understands class, and ‘classism,’ in terms of the privilege experienced by a wealthy individual, or the oppression experienced by a poor individual. It conceives class as one of many identities making up the pyramid.

Marxists understand class as an economic relation more than an identity. Class is defined by ownership of the means of production (land, factories and people) with the majority lacking ownership. Gender, by contrast, is mainly an identity, which is partially but not entirely autonomous from class. A given individual woman can climb to (or near) the top rung of the pyramid and remain identified as a woman. By definition, a given worker cannot reach the top and remain a worker, unless we demolish the pyramid.

Class and identity-based oppression are deeply entwined. Oppressed groups overwhelmingly lack ownership of the means of production (only 4% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women). However, these struggles and experiences are far from homogeneous. As African American socialist-feminist Angela Davis asks:

“How can we be together in a unity that is not simplistic and oppressive? How can we be together in a unity that is complex and emancipatory?”

If socialists do not recognise and work to address daily disparities, for example by considering the needs of primary caregivers in political organising, unity will be simplistic and oppressive.

Our class politics must complement our intersectional feminist politics, neither subsuming the other.

## What is to be done?



In response to the combined state offensive against wage workers and beneficiaries, socialists must draw the necessary links between social movements (including gender liberation and beneficiary advocacy) and industrial struggles. Wage workers are not 'more important' than other oppressed groups; however the fusion of wider social struggles with industrial power is needed to actually overturn this system.

Currently, struggles both by paid and unpaid workers are mainly defensive; maintaining hard-won rights where possible. Transformative politics must move from defence to offence, by actively building the strength of struggles on the ground and by raising demands that link current experiences with the road to socialism.

Socialists have called for free public childcare, fully-funded education, free public restaurants and public responsibility for all forms of reproductive work. These demands remain relevant. Ultimately, a democratically planned system could work to meet social needs collectively, rather than relegating them to unpaid private labour.

Connected to the liberation of private reproductive labour, socialists must support the generalised liberation of bodies from gendered control. This includes self-determination in medicine (reproductive rights, fully funded gender-reassignment) combating rape culture, and defending survivor support services.

While raising these long-term demands on the system, socialist-feminists must also develop an anti-sexist praxis in our daily work. In part this means considering the immediate needs of women, and parents, here and now - not just after the revolution.

## Why you should get involved in Fightback

### 1. We are revolutionary socialists

We all live in a capitalist society, which means that the working-class majority experience exploitation and poverty in order to guarantee profits and luxury for the ruling-class minority.

The capitalists have many weapons at their disposal – not just the army, police, courts and prisons, but a system of ideas, developed over centuries, that shape people's beliefs about what is normal, natural, and possible. These

prevailing ideas tell us that we can do no more than tinker with the current system. However, the current economic crisis shows more clearly than ever that society must be radically reorganised if it is to serve the interests of the working-class majority. To challenge the entrenched power of the ruling class, workers cannot rely on parliament or parties like Labour, which support the existing system. We need to build a movement which can develop alternative, anti-capitalist ideas to create a revolution.

### 2. We support workers' resistance

The fundamental basis of our politics is class struggle. For us, socialism – a society in which the means of producing wealth are owned collectively and run democratically for the benefit of everyone – can only come about when we, the people who produce the wealth, liberate ourselves from capitalist exploitation. Fightback does everything it can to support all workers' struggles – from the smallest work stoppage to a full-on factory

occupation – as these are the basic forms of resistance to capitalist rule. As workers start running their workplaces and industries on their own, they will start to ask, "Why can't we run the whole country – and more?" We take inspiration from historical examples of workers' control such as the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution, and study their successes and failures.

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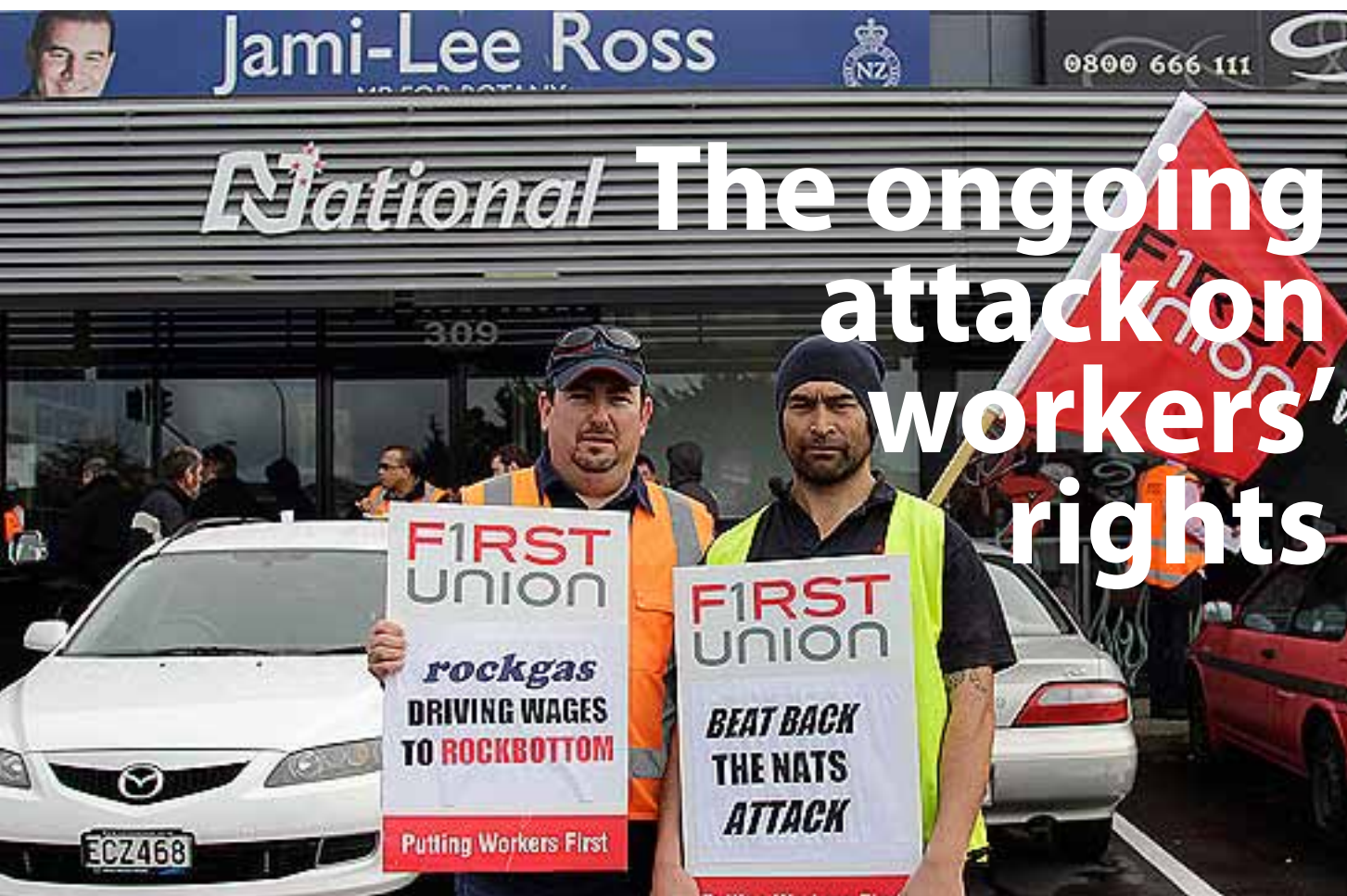
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# Industrial struggle



## The ongoing attack on workers' rights

*Joel Cosgrove, Fightback member.*

It's ironic that the Employment Relations (Continuity of Labour) Bill is being put forward by National backbench MP Jamie-Lee Ross. The bill which allows employers to bring in temporary staff (scabs) to work when workers are on strike is being put forward by an MP who has no history of actual work, having first been elected to the Manukau City Council at 18 in 2004 and then to the parliamentary seat of Botany at 25 in 2011.

### Background

Under the Employment Relations Act passed by the Labour Government in 2000 employers were barred from taking on any staff/volunteers/family to work during strikes in place of the strikers. The same rules were in place in relation to lockouts.

Previously the law had been silent on the issue.

Ross' bill overturns section 97 of the ERA and positively condones the use of staff/volunteers/family to undermine strikes and expressly weaken organised workers.

In the explanatory note Ross explains that restrictions contained in section 97 "prevented employers from maintaining business continuity", and that "the law needed to provide a balance between employers and employees to be fair."

Ross' private members bill comes amidst wider attacks on worker's rights to organise and take strikes such as the Employment Relations Act Amendment Bill, a government bill which has passed its first reading with support from John Banks and Peter Dunne. There are a number of major issues with the bill:

Employers don't have to complete collective negotiations. This provision was part of the vague 'good faith' provisions

that 5th Labour Government's Employment Relations Act brought into industrial law. Under these new regulations employers don't need to finish negotiations, they can let them lapse. This was an important part of what allowed the Maritime Union to last in its fight with Ports of Auckland.

Unions would have to give advance notice of strike action. They would require unions to provide information on "nature of the proposed strike, including whether or not it will be continuous". What this would do is provide advance notice of time and location of any proposed strikes. Combined with Jamie-Lee Ross' law this would allow employers to hire scabs in advance and take out much of the impact of any workers taking strike action.

Employers would be able to take arbitrary charges from worker's pay for "partial strikes". Anything short of striking i.e. go-slows, work-to-rules would be classed as a 'partial strike' and the

employer could take a 10% flat rate deduction from worker's pay. They can come up with higher penalty based on their own calculations of the lost time resulting from the 'partial strike'. Unions would also have to notify employers of any proposed 'partial strike'.

The bill also seeks to undermine MECAs (multi-employer collective agreements)

by making it straight forward to pull out of one. At the moment, the Nurses collective covers almost [or all] of the District Health Boards; the attempt here is to break up the national MECA and pit individual DHBs against each other, forcing down wages at a regional/local level.

The bill would also cut out any requirement to have breaks and take out the 30 day opt out-in clause that currently enrolls a new worker into the union collective contract.

Seeing as Unite Union is taking McDonald's to court for what it estimates is \$2.5 million in breaks not taken and yet taken out of worker's pay, workers aren't taking the breaks that they are currently entitled to. It is likely that in a lot of worksites breaks will happen if there is time, which in many cases there isn't, as many workplaces are understaffed and can't function with a worker off on a break. The reasoning for taking the 30-day clause is given in the bill itself, as it describes that the change "will enable employers to offer individual terms and conditions that are less than those in the collective agree-



Kim Campbell of the EMA has cautioned those pushing Ross' bill that it might have unintended consequences which disrupt a decade that has been very much in employers' favour.

ment". Instead of having time to talk to the union, workers will be locked into an individual contract that will quite possibly include both lower pay and an agreement to take breaks if possible.

Why is this happening? Each of these changes undermines unions' work in recruiting members and maintaining conditions. Specifically the Nurses Union, which in the last decade has been successful at winning its MECA which is part of achieving better pay and conditions.

While the Employment Relations Act Amendment Bill is the main attack on organised labour, Ross' Employment Relations (Continuity of Labour) Bill plays the role of the cavalry in a 17th century Napoleonic army. It's there to feint and distract and then finish off resistance.

Although Ross is a backbench MP with less than three years' experience, he is ambitious and part of a far-right wider grouping within the National Party, associated with the now notorious campaigner-for-hire Simon Lusk. In a position paper titled "Building A Conservative Fiscal Majority" leaked from

an opposing faction of the National party, Lusk lines up a perspective that the National Party is not conservative enough and puts forward the need to move the 'political centre to the right'.

Lusk outlines his view that:

"This National government has been a disappointment to fiscal conservatives. The wet wing of the National Party controls the senior ranks of the party and cannot be easily replaced without losing an election. After National loses an election there will be a clean out."

He outlines finding young 'fiscal conservatives' and planting them in safe National seats, gaining experience in local body politics, as well as bailing up current MPs with the threat of no lucrative business contracts after they leave parliament. Lusk also outlines developing more 'fiscal conservatives' in the public service to aid MPs.

Lusk is associated closely with Justice Minister Judith Collins, the Young Nationals (him and a number of new MPs, including Jamie-Lee Ross).

Ross' bill has been supported by a motion from the Northern Region



# Industrial struggle

conference, set to be tabled at the national conference in August. With the Northern Region being the largest and most powerful regional bloc within the National Party, there is clearly some groundswell support, even if the senior “wet” leadership of the party aren’t enthusiastic about it. Ross has also admitted on *The Nation* that the bill has been prompted and looked over by Ports of Auckland, an ongoing industrial conflict that Lusk has admitted in his internal document to having influenced and shaped through partisan right-wing blogs.

While PM John Key has indicated that National is only committed to supporting the first reading, Ross has said that he believes that bill is important, as well as being a part of National’s wider plan to “restore a balance between employers and employees”. The question that needs to be probed further is whose wider plan? And is the National Party that John Key is talking about the same National Party as Ross’?

## Disquiet in the ranks of the employers?

In 2006 Key as Leader of the opposition National party was quoted as saying “we haven’t argued for some time that we would go all the way back to the Employment Contracts Act, largely because the Employment Relations Act is 85 per cent a rewrite of the Employment Contracts Act anyway”.

How serious Key was in this statement is debatable. What is not, is sections within the employer class who are uncomfortable about legislative change.

“In spite of several high profile cases we have had 10 to 15 years of harmonious workplace relations and don’t want to jeopardise that. We need to look carefully at the implications of industrial action on essential industries such as the ports and hospitals, as well as on small businesses”, says Kim Campbell of the

Employers and Manufacturers Association. Campbell, chief executive of the EMA, has acknowledged that while the bill might well appear as a good idea to employers, it might not take into account unintended consequences. “While its principles are worth exploring it could prove very divisive”.

To pass legislation the Key government has relied on ACT MP John Banks, United Future MP Peter Dunne and the Maori Party to pass legislation. Both the Maori Party and Dunne have ruled out voting for the legislation, although NZ First have been silent to date on whether they would vote for the legislation or not.

## Union response

In an editorial on Ross’ bill, John Jones from the *Gisborne Herald* states that unions “have seen their power steadily diminish over the past three decades”, and their response has demonstrated that there is no clear plan to change this.

“National have rejected this policy to date and we encourage them not to change their mind”, says Peter Conway Secretary of the Council of Trade Unions (CTU).

The Public Service Association (PSA) National Secretary and CTU Vice President Richard Wagstaff described the legislation as being a “distasteful piece of legislation” adding that “it will encourage employer to take a more aggressive approach towards unions and collective bargaining”. Conway added that “if the bill becomes law it will reduce the impact of a strike and create huge conflict between strikers and replacement labour. Workers are already campaigning against the Employment Relations Amendment Bill which will reduce wages and this bill is just another attack”.

Their campaign to date seems to be focused around making online submissions

to the select committee that the bill has been sent to. Quite possibly there will be a campaign to send in postcards to the Minister of Labour Simon Bridges.

The response for a while now has been to send our sternly worded press releases, start petitions, make submissions or send in glossy postcards. If the situation is incredibly dire then there might well be a rally where workers are bussed to parliament on paid stop-work time.

That National Party are not afraid of any response from the unions; they know the response and they are not worried at all. It’s like a cat playing with a bird with no wings.

The perspective of the union organisers and hierarchy is outlined well by this statement by Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU) Waikato organiser Myles Leeson: “There have been no major hassles on any of my sites for quite some time. People need to know that industrial action is always a last straw, a last resort that we only want to make use of if we absolutely have to. It’s not a path we want to go down.”

Labour MP Darien Fenton (previously the head of the Service and Food Workers Union) when interviewed on *The Nation* in response to an interview with Jamie-Lee Ross, argued that there were 12 officially recognised strikes in 2011 and that section 97 (the section that Ross is trying to get rid of in his private members bill) already allows companies to use already employed workers to scab on striking workers. Their argument is that what is being proposed can already be done; nothing to see here, move on.

## We need fighting unions

Total union membership has decreased from 680,000 (43.5% of total workforce) in December 1985 to 305,000 (17.7%) in December 1998 and 380,000 in 2011 (17.4%). When EPMU National Secre-

# Industrial struggle



We need to build a confident union movement that breaks with almost two decades of inwards looking and retreats.

tary Bill Newsom says “It’s already very difficult, in an era of reasonably high unemployment and very low economic activity, for workers to test their employers for fairer wage outcomes”, it’s true. The problem, however, is that the union movement has stagnated since hitting rock bottom in 1998. It’s been a long time at the bottom. We need new ideas, new strategies in order to win. There are examples that can be learnt from and studied; UNITE in fast food, FIRST at the Warehouse and the Nurses union over the last decade. Yet the attempt by the CTU to start Together Union is

described on their website as “an initiative of the Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi(CTU) to provide New Zealanders who don’t belong to a trade union with the chance to be part of an organisation that supports worker rights. It also provides individual workers with much-needed support in their day-to-day jobs”. The union has anecdotally estimated to have signed on 70 members. The problem is that workers face bullying, denial of legal rights and pay; they need someone who they can rely on, who they can develop a relationship with and trust. The only thing worse

than being picked on by an employer, is being targeted after a union organiser has come and gone leaving workers to fend for themselves. In un-unionised workplaces the employer can take on the self-appointed status of a demi-god, unquestioned and unchallenged. The most important thing in this situation is to take worker’s backs and stop them being persecuted.

This is all part of what is being talked about with regards to the idea of a ‘fighting union’.

# Industrial struggle

## McDonald's strike reports

### June 14th strike report: Bunny Street McDonald's, Wellington

Bunny St McDonald's had its second McStrike today with seven members of staff dropping tools and coming out to join the picket line; in fact, they'd already come outside before the picket line had even been set up.

The picket began as supporters came around the corner and saw the workers already set up outside, with the first chant of the day starting "old McDonald's had a strike, e i e i o, and on that strike there was Unite, e i e i o. With a strike, strike here and a strike, strike there. Here a strike, there a strike, everywhere a strike strike. Old McDonald's had a strike..."

There was a huge well of support for the strike, with a large, visible majority of people clearly choosing not to come inside (the difference in walk in traffic is obvious; as soon as the picket line ends, people flood in).

The store owner was clearly rattled and angry, demanding that we stay well clear of the main door and that we don't try to dissuade people from coming inside, claiming that he was concerned about 'health and safety'. When challenged that real health and safety issues were understaffing his store, paying the minimum wage and in effect stealing pay by not letting staff go on their legal breaks, he stalked inside, glaring outside every so often.

A number of people decided to show solidarity by going elsewhere, when confronted with the workers and the picket line.

A small minority of people decided to push their way through in their desperate desire to get their burgers. The people who pushed through were arguing a number of points; that it was their right, that we would get more support if we just let people in, or that they just wanted to get in and we weren't going to stop them.

What's interesting about this situation with these people who pushed so hard for their right to consume their burger is the primacy of the relationship between the consumer and the burger, and if they were confronted by the workers they quickly pushed past and went inside, desperately trying to ignore them. The relationship is between the consumer and the burger, not the consumer and the worker.

Already rumours are going around of wildcat strikes all around the city that haven't happened, and yet the workers at various stores swear they have. Management are trying desperately to shut down any discussion about what is happening and yet this is only giving off the impression that there is something to hide, which fuels the interest and reputation of the union.

### June 15th strike report: Taranaki St McDonald's, Wellington

After the second Bunny St strike in Wellington, Unite Union and supporters headed to Taranaki St McDonald's to support workers facing intimidation and union-busting. The franchisee owner at Taranaki St has denied workers the right to speak to union representatives, and told them they would be disciplined if they took their right to go on strike. These are hard-won legal rights.

The tone of this demonstration was different from other stores, where the whole crew came out. One staunch delegate came out on strike at Taranaki St, and demonstrators did not block the door, although discouraging the public from supporting McDonalds. In keeping with his particular style of intimidation, the franchisee owner called the police and filmed the demonstrators. However, the cops have backed off from touching Unite demonstrators after the PR disaster of demanding free meals.

In this case, the aim was to show that the community supports the workers in the store. Supporters chanted "What's disgusting? Union busting" and "Mess with the members, we'll be back." Delegates from other stores got up on the megaphone and talked of their experiences.

At the end of the hour-long strike, Unite organiser and Fightback member Heleyni Pratley, along with a union lawyer, stayed behind to ensure that the franchisee owner did not intimidate union members. Actions like these are needed to rebuild workers' confidence in this defensive period.





# Istanbul to Brazil: neoliberalism, democracy and resistance



Protestors in Taksim Square, Istanbul, Turkey have reclaimed all sorts of private property for the use as public spaces.

*Reprinted from the International Socialist Organisation (Aotearoa). Andrew Tait originally delivered this as a talk to the Dunedin branch of the ISO.*

Three weeks ago, police moved in to clear a protest camp out of an inner-city park, to make way for a shopping mall.

The protesters were a mixed bunch: leftists, environmentalists, even architects, who felt they had no other option than direct action to stop the destruction of another piece of history, another park, another shared social space. The police moved in with brutality, with near-lethal force. Images of their violence were shared on the internet and instantly sparked outrage from hundreds of thousands of people, especially

youth. After three weeks of demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, the police have managed to clear and hold the city square and protests are quietening down. But after the police moved in, council workers followed, planting trees and flowers – a sign perhaps that the mall development has been abandoned.

Elsewhere, a demonstration against public transport fare rises was attacked by the police, sparking an outpouring of anger and copycat protests and riots. In one city, a police facility was burned and the City Hall was attacked. The government backed down and the price hikes were scrapped, but protests are continuing – now against the spending of billions on hosting a sports event instead of funding health and education.

The first country is Turkey and the second is Brazil. The same events could have taken place in almost any developed country – in Auckland, Jo'burg, Paris, Beijing. Although each country has its own culture and history, there is a massive political convergence underway from Istanbul to Brazil.

One reason often suggested for this convergence is the internet. The ability to share not just messages but images, movies and music has eroded the traditional boundaries between young people in different countries and has broken the stranglehold of monopoly media.

But important though this new technology is, there is a deeper reason: neoliberalism has globalised production, meaning work and wages are similar





The effects of centuries of imperialism, inequality as well as US sponsored and supported dictatorships have left Brazil a nation full of contradictions that have exploded recently in mass protests across the country.

across more countries than ever before, and neoliberalism has deprived democracy of real content because “there is no alternative” to the market and austerity. There are more supposedly democratic countries in the world than ever – but the range of political choices and citizen engagement is declining.

Both Brazil and Turkey are “new democracies”, which only emerged from military dictatorships in the 1980s. Both have booming economies. Brazil has emerged from Third World semi-colonial status to become the seventh largest economy in the world. It is often cited, alongside Russia, India and China, as an emerging power. Turkey, although smaller, has also enjoyed double digit GDP growth recently but the benefit of

this growth, as in Brazil, has been unevenly shared. It is now one of the most unequal countries in the OECD.

The protests in Brazil and Turkey show that all is not well. However, their governments are anxious to debunk any idea that the revolution is in the air. Turkish President Abdullah Gul recently assured anxious businessmen that these events were not comparable to the revolutions that erupted in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011. Addressing a meeting of Turkey’s International Investors Association just a day after Istanbul’s stock market fell by 10.5 percent in response to the popular upheaval, Gul said: “Two years ago in London, cars were burned and shops were looted because of similar reasons.

“During revolts in Spain due to the economic crisis, people filled the squares.

“The Occupy Wall Street movement continued for months in the United States. What happens in Turkey is similar to these countries.”

Gul is anxious to prove that Turkey, which is a candidate country for EU membership, is more similar to the West than it is to Syria. This is accurate but it says more about the weakness of western democracy than the strength of Turkish democracy.

The New World Order: failed states and police states

During the Cold War, authoritarian, often militarised states were the rule

everywhere – even in countries suffering civil war. Since the end of the Cold War, state collapse has become more common – in Afghanistan, Somalia, Mali, Congo, Yugoslavia, Iraq and most recently, Syria.

In the bipolar Cold War world, the collapse of a state was seen as an opportunity for the opposing side – either the US or the USSR to move in and establish a client regime. In the Third World, authoritarian regimes, whether pro-US or pro-USSR were encouraged and formal democracy suffered. Brazil and Turkey were pro-US authoritarian regimes. The military dictatorships of the 70s and 80s were established in reaction to the 1968 movement, the most recent worldwide rebellion of youth and workers to shake capitalism.

In France, Spain, Portugal and Greece, the popular movements succeeded in overthrowing authoritarian style governments and ushering in a more liberal era, but in Turkey and Brazil, democracy was seen as a luxury best done without, for fear elections would lead those countries to join the “Dark Side” – the USSR.

Brazil and Turkey, like Chile, became the testing ground for a new economic theory – neoliberalism – which preached privatisation and austerity instead of state-led industrial development and welfare. The military were able to smash trade union and peasant opposition and open up parts of the world economy to international finance – mainly US but also other players, such as NZ’s Fletcher Challenge.

Initially, these experiments seemed to meet with success. Massive wealth was created – for the elites – in a renewed round of primitive accumulation as wages were slashed, and environmental safety disregarded. Neoliberalism grew prolifically as it was watered with the blood of hundreds of thousands of opposition activists, peasants and workers.

Then there was a blowback into the

first world as the Western financial and military advisors to military neoliberal regimes in the Third World – Negroponte for example – started to turn their attention to what could be achieved by neoliberalism in the First World as well.

Margaret Thatcher was elected in 1979 in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in 1980 in the United States. Both set their sights on destroying the union movement, rolling back welfare and privatising everything that moved. Their methods were copied throughout the first world, in New Zealand under David Lange.

The results have been a massive increase in the gap between the rich and the poor, and a gutting of democracy. Quite simply, in the past, a lot more of life was either under state control (for example the old NZ Electricity Board) or was not under either state or market control – people owned their own houses, grew more of their own food, participated in sports and community groups that were independent of the market or the state. This meant communities had a greater say over their lives than is the case now.

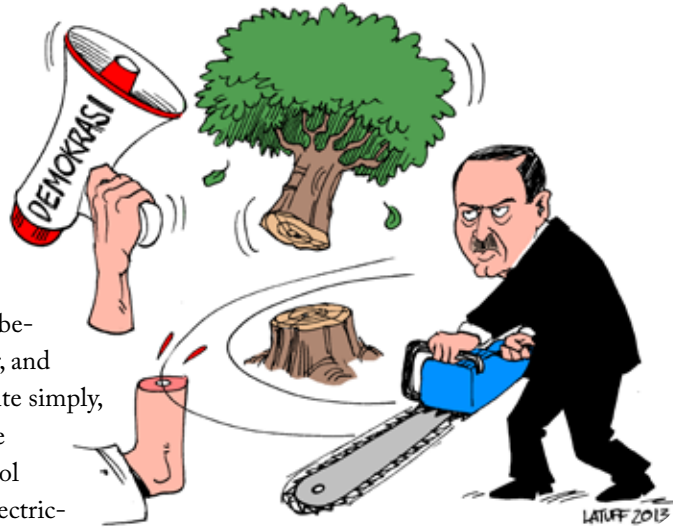
A classic illustration of neoliberalism is the National Government’s moves to force solo mothers into work. Women on the benefit who have another child are supposed to put their child into care after they turn one and go to work. The state forces women into privatised childcare and the job market.

Another effect has been the loss of jobs, in manufacturing especially, to the former Third World. Chinese, Turkish and Brazilian capitalists have all benefited from outsourcing of factories to low-wage economies.

The stability of the First World, with democracy, Labour Parties, trade unions

and jobs for life is looking increasingly like a thing of the past. Meanwhile, in the developing countries, the material wealth that was supposed to guarantee a better standard of living and more freedom for all has instead been siphoned off by the wealthy – local and overseas.

This in turn has meant that the living standards of young people in all parts of the world start to look increasingly similar.



Turkish cartoon criticising the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

## Resistance

As a result, resistance looks more and more the same, from Wall St to Gezi Square. Not only are we using the same technology, we are also working in the same sort of jobs (even for the same companies), with increasingly similar job security, facing the same struggles to pay for food and housing, and keep our private debt under control.

Politically, while people in the former Third World have to deal with the anti-democratic legacy of authoritarianism – thousands of people have been arrested in Turkey in dawn raids – in NZ and elsewhere in the former First World we also have less and less control over politics.

In Turkey, the European Union Minister Egemen Bagis said “From now on the state will unfortunately have to



# International

consider everyone who remains there [in Gezi Square] a supporter or member of a terror organization.” In New Zealand, the Labour Government introduced anti-terror legislation claiming it would not be used against New Zealanders, but then used it (of course) against Maori.

We have less and less control of politics, party politics has declined and we are more of a police-state than ever – by any measure.

This means protests happen less often but when they do they are more explosive and unpredictable.

There are great dangers to this. So far I’ve been talking about authoritarian states that have morphed in the 80s into neoliberal democracies but in many other countries, the authoritarian states never morphed, they just collapsed.

Saddam Hussein, Assad, Mubarak and Gaddafi all ruled capitalist or state capitalist regimes, and now all except Egypt seem to be slipping into chaos. The market madness that replaces trains with expensive and destructive private cars and trucks and fails again and again to deliver basic needs can lead to a more vicious, more atavistic kind of madness, where people rely on patronage and community networks to survive in a violent competition.

Much of Africa is kept in this condition, with little hope of an Occupy Wall Street or Tahrir Square breaking through oligarchic control, because of the level of violence and tribalism. This is not a cultural critique. It could happen anywhere.

Yugoslavia was once a prosperous, western-style economy, highly educated

and industrialised, with well-integrated communities, which overnight descended into tribalist savagery. The combination of neoliberal austerity with nationalist politics proved too great for that nation state to bear.

The key, as ever, is the organised working class. In Egypt the revolution overthrew Mubarak quickly, because of the power of the organised working class. In Turkey, the organised working class, battered and bruised by years of repression and anti-union laws, was not able to mobilise in convincing numbers in support of the Gezi protests. Without the working class, we are left with the sight of the “Standing Man” a lone individual confronting the state in a very aesthetic, but purely symbolic way.



In Egypt, Iceland and Greece we’ve seen symbolic protests turned into the totality of struggle, with “Standing Man”, we see a form of protest approved of by the state. We need to look beyond the iconic images of the mainstream press and look below the surface into the masses that have driven these protest movements across the world

## Papua New Guinea may pull out of trade agreement

*Byron Clark, Fightback coordinating editor.*

Papua New Guinea (PNG) looks likely to pull out of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER), the trade agreement between Australia, New Zealand and the island nations of the Pacific. This comes as the latest round of talks for 'PACER Plus', a new pact aiming to replace the current PACER agreement, failed to secure key demands of Pacific nations, such as labour mobility in the region.

PNG Trade Minister Richard Maru has stated he would prefer to focus on strengthening the Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement, a sub-regional preferential trade agreement which includes PNG, Vanuatu, The Solomon Islands and Fiji. Excluding Australia and New Zealand, the MSG bloc includes over 90% of the Pacific population.

Maru has described the PACER agreement as "a waste of time":

"Right now if we enter into such an arrangement it will be one sided all the goods will be coming from Australia and New Zealand into the Pacific market. At the moment we are not really doing much trading with Australia and New Zealand. We can't even sell taro there, we have no capacity to sell our greens it's all one sided traffic so what's the point of going into a trading arrangement with Australia and New Zealand".

Other Pacific leaders sympathise with PNG's position. Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Gordon Darcy Lilo said "I don't blame them for saying that... there is potential for much more meaningful trade cooperation within the

Melanesian sub-regions of the Pacific". Fijian Minister for Trade Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum told Radio Australia that Fiji sees a lot of merit in PNG's position. Khaiyum has also spoken of the need to re-examine the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) which includes Polynesia and Micronesia.

Adam Wolfenden & Maureen Penjueli of the Pacific Action Network on Globalisation (PANG) have suggested the Pacific region look to overseas examples such as The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), a trade agreement set up in South America by Venezuela under Hugo Chavez as an attempt at regional economic integration based on a vision of social welfare, bartering and mutual economic aid.

"Instead of pitting the countries against each other like PACER-Plus would, ALBA looks at ways that countries can help each other in the spirit of solidarity with guaranteed benefits for all those who participate...[A] far cry from what is currently on the table...PNG is right to want to walk away from PACER-Plus."

The aims of the MSG trade agreement are not dissimilar to those of ALBA. The preamble for the agreement mentions "the overriding need to foster, accelerate and encourage the economic and social development of [Melanesian] States in order to improve the living standards of their peoples" and states that "the promotion of harmonious economic development ... calls for effective economic cooperation".

This is unsurprising given one of the founding members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group was Walter Lini, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of

Vanuatu and an advocate of "Melanesian socialism" who believed that the principles of socialism were inherently compatible with Melanesian societies and customs.

Australian and New Zealand business interests, which have often used the Pacific region as a market for goods and a source of cheap labour, will likely be at odds with this growing regionalism in Melanesia led by Papua New Guinea - a nation which has in recent years gained more control over its natural resources following decades of colonial and post-colonial exploitation. The people of the Pacific however are likely to benefit.

"Papua New Guinea is not boasting about its richness over the world in their resource abundance that they have." Gordon Lilo told Radio Australia, "It is all about sharing the fortunes that they have for the development of a broader Melanesian region. And that is what we are getting out of it, a region that is committed to human development, and expansion of the space and the environment between the Melanesian region for all of our citizen to be able to prosper."



# Review

## Review: Five Broken Cameras

*Review: Five Broken Cameras (Palestinian documentary)*

*Directors: Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi*

*Distributed by: Kino Lorber*

*Release year: 2011*

*Review: Ian Anderson*

Screened as part of Aotearoa/NZ's first national Conference on Palestine, *Five Broken Cameras* portrays the resistance of a Palestinian village (Bil'in) to the expansion of Israel's Separation Wall and settlements. Strictly the wall is illegal in international law, and the settlement expansions are dubious even in Israeli law however no amount of paper resolutions will stop the advance of colonisation. Only popular resistance can slow, and ultimately stop, this monster.

The film's narrative is structured around co-director Emad Burnat's titular five broken cameras, home video cameras. Emad uses these cameras to capture both the resistance of his own community, and the brutality of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) which destroys both the hardware and the people which records them. Given the level of access the cameras have, it's apparent that editors Guy Davidi and Véronique Lagoarde-Ségot used other footage to

flesh the narrative out; five additional photographers are credited.

These cameras document an intensely personal and political story: the story of Emad and his community in Bil'in. Focusing on this community's experience as part of the wider Palestinian struggle, the film largely leaves macro-level political questions of statehood and the nature of Israel to the audience. Surrounded by soldiers, military vehicles and Caterpillar bulldozers, the men of this community march down to the encroaching wall each week, joined at times by international activists. At home, Emad's wife Soraya Burnat soldiers on despite the constant threat to herself and her family. Bil'in's resilience in the face of an expanding military machine embodies the slogan "resistance is existence."

The film also reflects on forms of resistance. Bil'in's resistance is largely guided by principles of non-violent civil disobedience. Palestinian youth throwing rocks pales in comparison to the US-funded military machine which has faced them since birth. At one point, Emad's narration reflects, "It's hard to maintain non-violent principles when you're surrounded by death." After

another Palestinian death, Emad's son Gibreel asks why he does not stab an IDF soldier, and Emad responds that they would shoot him. Although taking a non-violent tactical position, this is a far cry from the liberal Western humanitarianism which moralistically treats only certain forms of resistance as legitimate.

The film was co-directed by a Palestinian (Emad Burnat) and an Israeli (Guy Davidi). Their collaboration has caused controversy, with the Israeli embassy in the US claiming it as an Israeli film, and the directors stating that it is "first and foremost a Palestinian film." Norman Finkelstein, a critic of the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) of Israel, has criticised the BDS campaign for hypocrisy in not boycotting the film. However, the film actually does not meet the campaign's criteria for a cultural boycott, because it did not receive direct funding from the Israeli state and Israeli co-director Guy Davidi is critical of the occupation.

In fact, this is an exemplary case of cross-cultural work to challenge colonisation and support resistance. It is not enough, but it's well worth seeing.

